



State of Tennessee
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GOVERNOR JOHN SEVIER PAPERS
1796-1801
(First Tennessee of Administration)
(GP 2)

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Date Completed: 1964; 1988

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The official gubernatorial papers of the first administrations of John Sevier are noteworthy because of the material which they contain on Tennessee, its development and the problems encountered by the early settlers. The correspondence, both to and from the Governor, is filled with references to territorial problems, Indian hostilities, peace overtures, and general area of relations with both Indians and foreign governments.

Sevier's correspondence with Cherokee leaders evinced both friendliness and firmness, i.e. on April 2, 1796 he expressed regret that some Cherokee people had been kidnapped, apparently by whites, and promised that the guilty parties would be captured and punished. At the same time, however, he cautioned the Cherokees against resorting to punitive actions of their own against the white settlers.

Included in the correspondence are several letters from the leading chiefs. Dog warrior of the Creek Nation and John Watts, the well-known Cherokee leader, are represented by such letters which expound the issue of peaceful relations with the whites. In conjunction with this are several letters which deal with the removal of settlers from lands ceded to the Indians.

James Robertson, the pioneer leader in Middle Tennessee, warned Sevier in 1797 that some whites intended to settle on Chickasaw lands, a move that would only result in bloodshed. The Sevier collection has several documents which deal with later developments of this and unwarranted expeditions. A letter from James Ore on May 31, 1798, told of his trip through the Cherokee Nation, during which time he visited with a number of the principal chiefs at a Ball Play held at Amuchacha, in which they expressed their views on a prospective treaty at Tellico.

One interesting document is a copy of a letter written by William Blount and William Cocke to Governor Sevier. Written from Philadelphia on June 2, 1796, the letter tells of proceedings in Congress with regard to the admission of Tennessee into the Union. In another letter, Sevier commented on William Blount's expulsion from the United States Senate, noting that he had "imprudently involved himself in very serious difficulties".

Notable also in these papers is a large number of passports into and through Indian Lands which will give the researcher an accurate picture of the travel patterns and population dispersal patterns in early Tennessee and the southeastern portion of the United States.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Governor John Sevier

1745 September 23	Born near the present New Market, VA
1761	Married Sarah Hawkins
1773 December	Moved to Holston settlements in North Carolina's western lands
1773-1790	Followed the frontier down the valley, finally settling on the Nolichucky River
1780	Married Catherine Sherrill seven months after death of first wife
1780's	Governor of the State of Franklin which went defunct in 1788
1791	Commissioned Brigadier-General of Tennessee Militia
1796-1801	Served three successive terms as Tennessee's first elected Governor
1803-1809	Served three more successive terms
1809-1811	Member of the Tennessee State Senate
1811-1815	Member of the United States Congress
1815 (Sept. 24)	Died in Alabama while a member of a commission surveying the boundary of the Creek cession obtained by Andrew Jackson in 1814. Buried at Fort Decatur on the Tallapoosa River; his remains were later removed to Knoxville

CONTAINER LIST

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	8	Miscellaneous Papers	1796-1798
	9	Military Order Book	1796-1804
3	--	(Oversized) Justice of the Peace commissions from Sumner County	1796-1799
	--	Administration correspondence [Letterbook]	1796-1801
4	1	Commission and Bond Book for County Officers	1796-1815
	2	Proclamation, Warrants, Pardons, and Election Order Book	1796-1821

5	1	Proclamation, Sate of Franklin May 15, 1785
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	4	Passports to enter Indian Territory 1798
	5	Miscellaneous Papers 1798
	6	Miscellaneous Papers 1799
	7	Miscellaneous Papers 1800
	8	Sen. William Blount Impeachment Proceeding 1797
	9	Report: Census of White Settlers on Cherokee Lands, Silas Dinsmore- Agent 1796-1797

Note: items listed in the name and subject indexes with the letter “Q” refer to the oversized, bound book entitled: “Governor’s Correspondence, John Sevier, Letters Received; 1796-1809”.